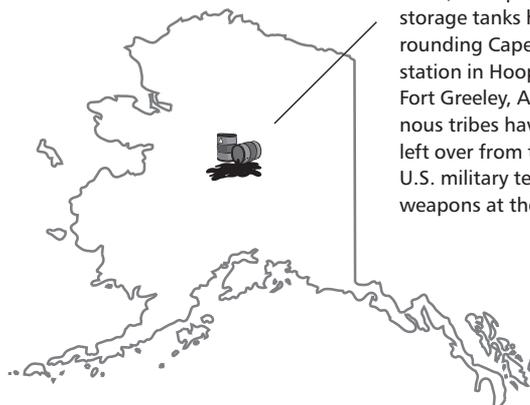


MAKUA VALLEY, HAWAII: In the Makua Valley, the U.S. Army's live-fire assault training has caused fires and erosion and introduced alien plants and animals. These activities have threatened over 40 endangered plant and animal species, including the elpano bird. Homes and churches have also been destroyed by the fires and erosion. In addition, heavy metals and other pollutants from the base have contaminated the soil and groundwater.



ALASKA: U.S. military landfills, drum storage areas, fuel spill areas, and leaking underground storage tanks have polluted communities surrounding Cape Romanzof Long Range Radar station in Hooper Bay, Alaska. While fishing near Fort Greeley, Alaska, members of local indigenous tribes have found canisters of mustard gas left over from the 1950s and 1960s—when the U.S. military tested biological and chemical weapons at the site.

LASSEN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA: The Sierra Army Depot—where the military burns and detonates munitions—ranked as California's top source of air pollution in 1999, releasing 17% of all the toxic air emissions for the entire state. Increased cancer rates have been reported in both the surrounding county and the nearby Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation in Nevada.

War on the Earth

BY BOB FELDMAN

In this era of “permanent war,” the U.S. war machine bombards civilians in places like Serbia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. It also makes “war on the earth,” both at home and abroad. The U.S. Department of Defense is, in fact, the world's largest polluter, producing more hazardous waste per year than the five largest U.S. chemical companies combined. Washington's Fairchild Air Force Base, the number one *producer* of hazardous waste among domestic military bases, generated over 13 million pounds of waste in 1997 (more than the weight of the Eiffel Tower's iron structure). Oklahoma's Tinker Air Force Base, the top toxic waste *emitter*, released over 600,000 pounds in the same year (the same amount of water would cover an entire football field about two inches deep).

Just about every U.S. military base and nuclear arms facility emits toxics into the environment. At many U.S. military target ranges, petroleum products and heavy metals used in bombs and bullets contaminate the soil and groundwater. And since the Pentagon operates its bases as “federal reservations,” they are usually beyond the reach of local and state environmental regulations. Local and state authorities often do not find out the extent of the toxic contamination until after a base is closed down.

Active and abandoned military bases have released toxic pollution from Cape Cod to San Diego, Alaska to Hawaii. In June 2001,

the Military Toxics Project and the Environmental Health Coalition released the report “Defend Our Health: A People's Report to Congress,” detailing the Pentagon's “war on the earth” in the United States and Puerto Rico. (See map on pp. 24-25.) The contaminants emitted from military bases include pesticides, solvents, petroleum, lead, mercury, and uranium. The health effects for the surrounding communities are devastating: miscarriages, low birth weights, birth defects, kidney disease, and cancer.

Even the Defense Department itself now acknowledges some of the environmental destruction wrought by the U.S. military worldwide. The Pentagon's own Inspector General documented, in a 1999 report, pollution at U.S. bases in Canada, Germany, Great Britain, Greenland, Iceland, Italy, Panama, the Philippines, South Korea, Spain, and Turkey. Again, since even U.S. military bases abroad are treated as U.S. territory, the installations typically remain exempt from the environmental authority of the host country.

Activists worldwide have called attention to the scourge of toxic pollution, target-range bombardment, noise pollution, abandoned munitions, and radioactive waste unleashed by U.S. bases. (See map on pp. 26-27.) The International Grassroots Summit on Military Bases Cleanup in 1999 brought together 70 representatives of citizen groups affected by U.S. military contamination. The gathering

adopted an “Environmental Bill of Rights for Persons, Indigenous Peoples, Communities and Nations Hosting Foreign and Colonial Military Bases,” declaring that past and present military bases “threaten health, welfare, and the environment, [as well as] future generations.” The document emphasizes that the burden of environmental destruction has fallen disproportionately on “economically disadvantaged communities, women, children, people of color and indigenous people.” And it demands that the “foreign and colonial” armed forces responsible for the contamination bear the costs the cleanup.”

Yet until the era of “permanent war” and global U.S. militarism gives way to an era of world peace, the U.S. military machine will likely remain above the law. And the Pentagon will continue its “war on the earth.” ■

Bob Feldman is a Dollars & Sense collective member.

RESOURCES Safety Forum Research/Safetyforum.com <www.safetyforum.com>; Military Toxics Project and Environmental Health Coalition, “Defend Our Health: A People's Report to Congress,” (June 2001); Greenpeace <www.greenpeace.org>; East Asia/U.S. Women's Network Against Militarism <www.apcjp.org/womens_network/skorea.htm>; Okinawan Peace Network of Los Angeles <www.uchinanchu.org>; Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Technical Assistance Visit, Final Report, 8/14/01; *Financial Times*, 9/7/01; Ecocompass/IslandPress; Fellowship of Reconciliation Panama Campaign <www.forusa.org/program/panama>; *Coastal Post* news-monthly <www.coastalpost.com>

WASHINGTON: The U.S. Navy is the leading cause of oil spills off the Washington coast. The Navy spilled over 10,000 gallons of oil into Puget Sound in 1998. It also tests depleted uranium weapons in prime fishing waters nearby.

COLONIE, NEW YORK: A plant which manufactured 30mm depleted uranium rounds for the U.S. military contaminated a nearby residential community, where the soil was found to contain 500 times more uranium than normal.

CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS: Starmet, a company that manufactured depleted uranium ammunition for the U.S. military, contaminated Concord's groundwater and soil with uranium. Local residents have contracted some cancers at rates up to twice those of other Massachusetts residents.

OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA: The Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry found the average birth weight in the Kimsey neighborhood near Tinker Air Force Base to be about two ounces lower than in other Oklahoma City neighborhoods. It attributed the low birth weights to Kimsey residents' greater exposure to chemicals released from the base.

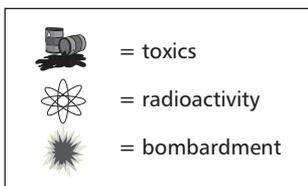
CAPE COD, MASSACHUSETTS: Toxic pollution from the Massachusetts Military Reservation, former site of Otis Military Base, has contaminated drinking water in the nearby town of Falmouth. Over the years, the military "recycled" old ammunition and hazardous wastes at Otis by openly burning them. It also dumped 6 million gallons of aviation fuel directly on the ground. By 1986, Falmouth's cancer rate was 38% higher than the state average.

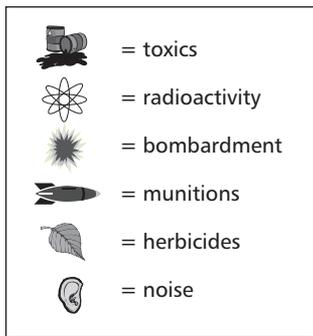
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA: The largest polluter in San Diego is the U.S. Navy, which has created 100 toxic and radioactive waste sites in San Diego Bay over the last eighty years. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration found that the bay had the country's second-most-toxic estuary sediments, with the pollution concentrated around Navy and Navy-contractor sites. Fish in San Diego Bay contain high levels of mercury and radioactive compounds. The Navy also spilled over 11,000 gallons of oil into the bay in 1998.

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS: Kelly Air Force Base ranked as the county's fifth-largest air polluter before its 2001 closing. Metals, solvents, and fuel from the base also contaminated the local groundwater. Over 70 former Kelly Air Force Base workers have developed Lou Gehrig's Disease in recent years. The U.S. Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry found elevated levels of cancer, low birth weight, and birth defects in the San Antonio neighborhood closest to the base.

ISLA DE VIEQUES, PUERTO RICO: After fifty years of U.S. Navy target practice, Isla de Vieques has more craters per square kilometer than the moon. The Navy's use of bombs, depleted uranium, and Agent Orange on Vieques has produced a cancer rate 26% higher than in the rest of Puerto Rico. Vieques's children also show high levels of mercury and lead. The Navy, which occupies 26,000 of the island's 33,000 acres, has also contaminated the soil, destroyed its coral reefs, and emitted toxic heavy metals into the marine environment.

MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE: The Pentagon's Defense Distribution Depot began operating as a chemical-weapons dump in the heart of Memphis' African-American community in 1942—and didn't warn residents of the danger. The depot contaminated the soil and groundwater. People who live nearby suffer a disproportionate number of miscarriages, birth defects, childhood cancers, and kidney ailments.





SERBIA: After the U.S. military bombed a petrochemical complex in the suburbs of Belgrade in 1999, the destroyed plastics factory and ammonia production unit released toxins such as chlorine into the air.

IRAQ: U.S. bombing of oil facilities in January 1991 caused spills of 6 to 8 million barrels of crude oil, killing about 30,000 marine birds. For nearly a year afterwards, oil well fires spewed toxic soot. The bombing also poisoned Iraqi water supplies. In addition, according to Iraq's Ministry of Health, depleted uranium from U.S. weapons has contaminated the soil and plants in southern Iraq, causing cancers and deformities associated with uranium exposure.

AFGHANISTAN: Following the Pentagon's 2001-2002 military campaign in Afghanistan, the Uranium Medical Research Center (UMRC) sent two scientific teams to Afghanistan to examine the effects of U.S. bombing on Kabul. Many residents, the UMRC teams found, had symptoms consistent with uranium exposure (joint pains, flu-like illnesses, bleeding mucous membranes, etc.). One fourth of the Kabul newborns examined had health problems consistent with uranium, including lethargy, skin rashes, and enlarged heads.

INDOCHINA: Nearly thirty years after the end of the U.S. war in Southeast Asia, many of the affected ecosystems have still not recovered, according to the Environmental Conference on Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam (Stockholm, 2002). Ten percent of southern Vietnam's forests (including one-third of the coastal mangroves, which play a vital role in the coastal ecosystem and fish habitats) were destroyed by the 72 million liters of herbicide the U.S. military dropped during the Vietnam War era. Arsenic and dioxin in the herbicides are expected to pose a health threat long into the future. Since 1975, 50,000 civilians have been killed by the landmines and other weapons the U.S. military left behind. The U.S.'s vast bombing campaign also left millions of large bomb craters.

SOUTH KOREA: Oil from the Yongsan 8th garrison's base has contaminated the soil and water. Asbestos has been found around the Camp Indian base. In May 1998, a ruptured pipeline at the Mt. Rackun military base polluted a large section of a South Korean forest conservancy area. U.S. military drills and maneuvers have also damaged farmlands and destroyed crops. Oil discharged by the U.S. Army has polluted the Sankogos River, contaminated farmland, and destroyed crops. Off the coast of South Korea, the U.S. military has used small islands as bombing ranges, creating noise pollution for nearby villages. The ammunition left behind has also injured residents.

OKINAWA: U.S. military exercises with live artillery have caused forest fires, soil erosion, and earth tremors—leaving sections of Okinawa barren and shell-ridden. Toxins emitted by the U.S. military have infiltrated Okinawa's land, water and air, and have been linked to low birth weights and elevated rates of leukemia and other cancers. Noise pollution at Kadena Air Base may also be a cause of low birth weights.

PHILIPPINES: The former site of Clark Air Base has contaminated the groundwater. The U.S. military also dumped hazardous waste in a municipal landfill in a residential area of Mabalacat. The power plant at the Subic Bay Naval Base emitted untreated pollutants directly into the air. Toxic waste from the destruction of excess bombs and ammunition were poured into local streams. In addition, most of the sewage generated at the Subic Bay base was discharged each day, untreated, directly into the bay.

CANADA: The U.S. military built a network of radar sites in Northern Canada between 1953 and 1958. Cancer-causing agents were used in the construction and maintenance of the sites, which are now contaminated.

GREENLAND: In 1968, a B-52 carrying four nuclear bombs crashed near the Pentagon's Thule Air Force base in northern Greenland, causing severe plutonium contamination of the area.

PANAMA: The U.S. military left firing ranges in the Panama Canal Zone littered with thousands of unexploded rounds. A July 1998 Pentagon report found that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dumped tons of soil from a project to widen the canal onto 92 acres in Panama's Empire Range, damaging the rain-forest ecosystem. A 1997 study for the U.S. Army also discovered the carcinogen TCI in the ground water at Fort Koblhe—at twenty times the level acceptable under U.S. federal law.

COLOMBIA: Large-scale herbicide spraying under the "Plan Colombia"—ostensibly for coca eradication—has caused "serious human health effects; large-scale destruction of food crops; and severe environmental impacts in sensitive tropical ecosystems," according to a 2002 report of the *Aerial Spraying Review*, an environmental publication. There is also evidence that the Pentagon-sponsored fumigation campaign has caused a "loss of agricultural resources, including fish kills and sickness and death of livestock." Border areas of Ecuador have also been contaminated.

Dollars & Sense would like to acknowledge and thank the Military Toxics Project (MTP) for much of the information on these pages. The MTP seeks to "unite activists, organizations, and communities in the struggle to clean up military pollution, safeguard the transportation of hazardous materials, and to advance the development and implementation of preventive solutions to the toxic and radioactive pollution caused by military activities." For more information readers can write to Military Toxics Project, P.O. Box 558, Lewiston, ME 04243, call 207-783-5091 or visit <www.milttoxproj.org>.